CRITICAL PRACTICE IN AN AGE OF COMPLEXITY - AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITIQUE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Paper / Proposal Title:
After the Storm: A Post-Critical Stance on Practice for Puerto Rico’s Reconstruction

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- Abstract (300 words):
Vulnerabilities that may be partly attributed to a “development” based on colonial mimicry (Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994) became fully visible after Maria. The devastation exposed socioeconomic asymmetries that had remained mostly hidden behind Puerto Rico’s tropical exuberance and a hyper-realistic simulation of modernity (Jean Baudrillard, Cultura y simulacro, 1978). Furthermore, President Trump’s emphasis on “islandness” as an extreme obstacle for disaster response and relief, as well as his introduction of a new interventionist rhetoric implying shock doctrine redevelopment (Naomi Klein, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, 2007) appear as affirmations of Puerto Rico’s coloniality (Walter Mignolo, The Idea of Latin America, 2005). Coloniality then, frames the Island’s contemporary crises—which intensified after the traumas and uncertainties left by the hurricane. Thus, extending on Tafuri’s indications,
normative architectural practice will not be capable of producing a divergent and radical stance against disaster capitalism—part of a postmodern logic of domination.

A long term sustainable transformation must reject rebuilding as a quick cosmetic band-aid solution, primarily supporting business interests. It also must acknowledge and understand the positions of authority that architectural education and practice have historically held and their tendency to subscribe (even if inadvertently) to the production and reproduction of inequality, injustice, privilege, and an imposed catalog of desires. The paper outlines how, in challenging the professional normative, a post-critical transdisciplinary practice can work as counter response to coloniality. Multidimensional and cross-referential dialogs among disciplines and stakeholders, but also, between historic precedents and present conditions and contexts pose (an)other possibility for reconstruction. Dissident practices, conversely, work on/from the margins. From their experiences, strategies, tools, and attitudes we may start to draw an alternative practice profile within a collaborative sensibility and work paradigm conducive to design under the prospects of crisis prevention and basic human rights.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

**Yara M. Colón Rodríguez** completed her doctoral studies at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (ETSAB) in 2010. She is currently a lecturer at the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico’s School of Architecture (ArqPoli) and at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas y Diseño de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico School of Fine Arts and Design). Professor Colón Rodríguez teaches several courses on the History and Theory of Architecture, Historiography, and History and Theory of Design. She is the editor of Polimorfo, the journal of ArqPoli. Her research addresses vernacular architecture studies and the historiography of architecture in Puerto Rico.

**Luz Marie Rodríguez** holds a doctoral degree in Theory and History of Architecture from the Polytechnic University of Cataluña in Barcelona. She lives in Dublin, Ohio, where she now works as a consultant. She was Senior Archivist and Researcher at the University of Puerto Rico’s Architecture and Construction Archives (1997-2012) and later, held the positions of Associate Dean (2012-2014) and Interim Dean (2014-2015) at the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico’s School of Architecture. She also taught history and studio courses in several architectural programs on the Island. Rodríguez’s is interested in studying the multiple ways ethnic, racial, and cultural relations, while affecting economic development and social reform, also play an important political role and assist in building architectural discursive trends that eventually, settle into cultural imaginaries. Her work addresses power discourse, colonial negotiations, and the construction of subaltern identities and the ways these are represented through architecture and urban design. She has published and lectured on these subjects both, locally and internationally. Rodríguez is also the author of three nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and is currently working on a book where she analyses New Deal colonial architecture.